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SUBJECT: IN TURKMENISTAN TOP SECURITY FIGURES RE-CONFIRMED; NEW JUSTICE MINISTER AND TRANSPORT DEPUTY CHAIRMAN APPOINTED

REFS:

- A) Ashgabat 230, B) Ashgabat 226, C) Ashgabat 221,
- D) Ashgabat 201, E) Ashgabat 146

Summary

¶1. (U) Turkmenistan's President Berdimuhamedov has reappointed his entire inherited "power ministries" team to serve in his own government, though without reappointing Defense Minister Mammetgeldiyev to his previous dual role as Secretary of the National Security Council. The new president also named a 32-year-old to be the new Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers for Transport, brought in another fresh face, Mejlis (Parliament) Human Rights Committee head Myrat Garryev, to be Turkmenistan's new Justice Minister, and confirmed Akdja Nurberdiyeva as Mejlis Speaker. The main outstanding question is how many more Cabinet Deputy Chairmen he may name. END SUMMARY.

The Old Guard is the New Guard

¶2. (SBU) Over the weekend, President Berdimuhamedov signed a number of decrees reappointing, as was universally expected, all Turkmenistan's top security and law-enforcement officials to their existing jobs:

- Agageldi Mammetgeldiyev as Minister of Defense;
- Geldimuhamed Ashyrmuhamedov as Minister of National Security;
- Bayram Alovov as chairman of the State Border Service, Commander of Border Troops;
- Akmamat Rahmanov as Interior Minister;
- Yagshygeldi Esenov as Chairman of the Supreme Court;
- Muhammetguly Ogshukov as Prosecutor General.

¶3. (U) Other security appointments in the latest batch of presidential decrees:

-- Lieutenant Colonel Muhammetberdi Gulyev, who until recently served as chairman of the Ahal province department of the Ministry of National Security, was appointed rector of Turkmenistan's military academy;

-- Jora Hudayberdiyev was appointed rector of Turkmenistan's police academy;

-- Atamyrat Gurdov was appointed rector of the Military Institute of the Ministry of Defense. Earlier, he worked as vice rector, first in the police academy and then in the military institute.

-- Agamyrat Geldiyev was appointed editor-in-chief of the Esger (Soldier) newspaper.

¶4. (SBU) Absent without explanation in this latest list of decrees was any mention of the overarching position of Secretary of the National Security Council, encumbered since 2003 by Defense Minister Mammetgeldiyev. The National Security Council, hitherto little-publicized, emerged to publicly play a key role in the brief interval after Niyazov's death. Additionally, the appointments of the new rectors at the police academy and military insitute depart from recent practice, in that the ministers no longer will also head the respective educational institutions related to their line of work.

Deputy Chairman (Transport) of the Cabinet

¶5. (U) Another February 23 decree named Gurbannazar Ashyrov new Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, simultaneously releasing him from his job as head of the "Turkmendenizderyayellari"

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(State Sea and River Transportation Company), to which he had been appointed only last week. The 32-year-old Ashyrov thereby vaults over the much older long-time Transport Minister Orazberdi Hudayberdiyev, who until now had himself combined his ministerial post with the Deputy Chairmanship for the sector. Ashyrov studied mathematics and computer technology, thereafter working in a series of consultancy/specialist occupations, including in the State Committee for Emergency (Crisis) Situations and, from 2000-2005, as head of the Transport and Communications Department of the Cabinet of Ministers.

New Mejlis Speaker and Committee Heads

¶6. (U) Other Berdimuhamedov decrees on February 23 selected Akja Nurberdiyeva as Chairman of the Mejlis, and Kasymkuly Babayev as Mejlis Deputy Chairman -- the position which Nurberdiyeva had technically continued to hold since she was elevated to the function of acting Chairman after the abrupt removal and arrest of former Speaker Atayev following Niyazov's death on December 21. Simultaneously published on February 24, over Nurberdiyeva's name, were five "Resolutions of the Mejlis" naming new heads to the Mejlis's five standing committees:

-- Dzuma Dzumayev as head of the Committee for Human Rights (i.e., replacing new Justice Minister Garryev; see below);

-- Maral Poltayeva as head of the Committee for Economy and Social Policy;

-- Ahmet Charyev as head of the Committee for Coordination with Local Government;

-- Ahmukammet Shamuhammedov as head of the Commiteee for International and InterParliamentary Affairs;

-- Baymyrat Babayev as head of the committee for science, education and culture.

¶7. (SBU) Comment: Dzuma Dzumayev, the new head of the Human Rights Committee, has a record of provocative comments as a committee member in past meetings on human-rights issues with embassy or working-level Washington visitors. Conversely, in three recent substantive meetings with high-level Washington visitors and the embassy, Chairman Nuberdiyeva has made a distinctively positive impression of professional competence and energy. Her openness to suggestions of expanded contacts and joint programs has seemed to blossom with each of our successive contacts (Refs D, E). End Comment.

NEW JUSTICE MINISTER: BIO NOTE

¶8. (U) Together with the law-enforcement ministers, Berdimuhamedov's latest edicts appointed a new Minister of Justice: Myrat Garryev, who most recently chaired the Mejlis's Committee on Human Rights. Garryev was born in 1962 in Mytishchi City of Moscow Oblast in the Russian Federation. His nationality is Turkmen. In 1979, he graduated from secondary school number 7 in Ashgabat and entered the Law Department of Turkmen State University named after Maxim Gorky. He graduated from the University in 1984 with a legal specialization and began his professional career in 1984 as a senior laboratory assistant at the Philosophy and Law Institute of the Academy of Sciences. Later, he worked at this organization as a junior research officer and a research officer. In 1987-1989, he participated at the staff development training course at the State and Law Institute of the Academy of Sciences, Moscow. In 1997-2001, Garryev worked as senior research officer and chief research officer at the National Institute of Democracy and Human Rights under the President of Turkmenistan. He authored 15 academic articles. Starting in 2001, he worked as Chief of the Sector on Law Enforcement Bodies at the Cabinet of Ministers and at the Presidential Apparatus. In the 2003 parliamentary by-elections, he was elected as a deputy and appointed Head of the Mejlis Legislation Committee, one of only five standing committees in the Mejlis, which

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was renamed the Committee on Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms on February 1, 2005. He is married and has three children. Garryev travelled to the U.S. as part of an OSCE interparliamentary delegation in summer 2005, spending July 4 in Washington D.C. He attended the January 31 embassy reception for visiting EUR/ACE Coordinator Adams, and has been a guest of Charge's at a working lunch on parliamentary cooperation.

COMMENT

¶9. (SBU) Now that Berdimuhamedov has reconfirmed across the board the "power ministries" team already in place, the sole major unknown is how many more Deputy Chairmen of the Cabinet of Ministers -- with their notionally overarching powers -- he may appoint. To date, he has named three: for International Affairs, Oil and Gas, and Transport. Five other such positions nominally exist on the Turkmenistan government chart, for: Agriculture; Trade/Commerce and Textiles; Economy, Finance and Banking; Education, Health, Science and Culture; and Energy, Industry and Construction. The agriculture position has been vacant for several years, and Agriculture Minister Orazgeldiyev was reappointed as minister last week, so perhaps there will be no change in the status quo. Conversely, a new Deputy Chair could be appointed in conjunction with the new directions for the sector that the upcoming March 20 session of the Halk Maslahaty (National People's Council) is supposed to enact. The Education and Economy/Finance Deputy Chair slots likewise remain vacant, even though Ministers have been reappointed. For Energy and Industry, Berdimuhamedov reappointed Yusup Dawudov as Minister but discontinued Dawudov's previous dual function as Deputy Chair. He could still elevate some new figure over Dawudov, analogous to what occurred with the Deputy Chairmanship for Oil and Gas. Nor has the new president filled his old slot as Deputy Chairman for Education and Health. He may feel that unnecessary. End Comment.

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